

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 15380

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, JA, KN
SUBJECT: FONMIN SONODA REMARKS ON JAPAN-NORTH KOREA
RELATIONS

REF: SEOUL 7430

1. ACCORDING TO MOFA NE ASIA DIVDIR PETER SATO, FONMIN SONODA WAS MISINTERPRETED RATHER THAN MISQUOTED BY PRESS FOLLOWING HIS AUGUST 18 REMARKS DURING DIET INTERPELLATIONS CONCERNING FUTURE JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA (REFTEL). READING TO EMBOFF AUGUST 24 FROM VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF DIET PROCEEDINGS, SATO EXPLAINED SONODA WAS RESPONDING TO QUESTION FROM JSP DIETWOMAN DOI, WHO ASKED FONMIN WHAT HIS PLANS WERE WITH REGARD TO SOVIET-JAPANESE AND KOREAN PENINSULA PROBLEMS FOLLOWING CONCLUSION OF PFT. SONODA INITIALLY RESPONDED THAT WHILE PARTY OPINION WAS NOT YET AGREED, IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW PEACE AND STABILITY OF KOREAN PENINSULA WAS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE, AND JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY SHOULD BE PREDICATED ON THAT PREMISE.

2. DOI THEN ASKED SONODA WHAT SPECIFIC MEASURES HE HAD IN MIND WITH REGARD TO NORTH KOREA. SONODA REPLIED THAT INASMUCH AS JAPAN HAD NO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH NORTH
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KOREA, ALL QUESTIONS HAD TO START FROM THAT POINT. HE SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE PEACE IN ASIA WOULD COME WITHOUT STABILITY ON KOREAN PENINSULA. HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO PROMOTE THAT GOAL BY TAKING AN OPPORTUNITY, OR CREATING AN OPPORTUNITY, TO HOLD TALKS BETWEEN JAPAN AND NORTH KOREA. PRESSED FURTHER, HE SAID THAT IF IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO TALK DIRECTLY, HE WAS PREPARED TO DO SO THROUGH

THIRD COUNTRIES.

3. SATO EXPLAINED THAT IN DAILY PRESS BACKGROUNDER THAT EVENING, SONODA SAID THAT HIS REMARKS WERE INTENDED AS GESTURE OF GOODWILL, DIRECTED MORE FOR INTERNAL JSP CONSUMPTION THAN ANYTHING ELSE. SATO ADDED THAT SONODA DID NOT CONSULT WORKING LEVEL BEFORE MAKING STATEMENT, AND ASSURED EMBOFF THAT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO CHANGE IN GOJ POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA, NOR WAS GOJ CONTEMPLATING ANY INITIATIVE. SATO ALSO SAID THAT WHEN AMBASSADOR KIM CALLED ON PM FUKUDA AUGUST 24, PM TOLD AMBASSADOR: "YOU MAY HEAR LOTS OF NOISE ABOUT JAPAN'S POSTURE TOWARD NORTH KOREA, BUT DO NOT TAKE IT SERIOUSLY." MANSFIELD

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